

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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TAGS: SOPN, PN
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTIONS

1-PANAMA CITY--REACTION TO SENATE PASSAGE OF THE TREATY OF NEUTRALITY HAS MOVED FROM THE GENERAL TO THE SPECIFIC WITH THE DECONCINI AMENDMENT DRAWING INCREASINGLY MORE ATTENTION. BEGINNING WITH THE PUBLICATION OF THE ENTIRE SENATE RESOLUTION MARCH 27 AND THE CORRECTED VERSION MARCH 28, PUBLIC DEBATE ON THE AMENDMENT HAS STEPPED UP. ACCORDING TO A FRANCISCO RUBIALES PANAMA DATELINE ACAN-EFE STORY IN MATUTINO MARCH 30, MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND TREATY NEGOTIATOR ROYO SAID RECENTLY "WE ARE TRYING TO SEE HOW WE CAN GET RID OF (SACUDIRNOS) THE DECONCINI AMENDMENT... I DON'T KNOW HOW WE'RE GOING TO GET RID OF IT BUT WE CERTAINLY CAN'T KEEP OUR ARMS CROSSED BEFORE THIS CLAIMED RIGHT TO INTERVENE IN PANAMA."

2-MARIO VELASQUEZ, THE POPULAR AND AUTHORITATIVE NEWS DIRECTOR
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OF TV-2 HAS COMMANDED CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION WITH A SERIES OF COMMENTARIES ON THE SENATE ACTION AND PANAMANIAN REACTION DELIVERED MARCH 27, 28, 29 ON THE EVENING TV NEWS. VALASQUEZ' COMMENTARIES TAKEN WITH THE COMPLETE TEXT OF SENATOR DECONCINI'S MARCH 16 REMARKS ON THE SENATE FLOOR AS CARRIED IN THE "PUBLIC CONSCIENCE" COLUMN OF GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED MATUTINO MARCH 28, 29, 30 HAVE BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN HIGHLIGHTING THE DECONCINI

AMENDMENT.

3-IN HIS MARCH 27 COMMENTARY, (FBIS-PA280230Y) VELASQUEZ REFERS AS MANY HAVE DONE TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY COMMUNIQUE OF MARCH 16. AND THE MARCH 15 TORRIJOS-CARTER LETTER, THE LATTER WHICH HE SAYS "VOICES THE UNANIMOUS FEELING OF THE PANAMANIAN" IN THAT "PANAMA WILL NOT ACCEPT ANY RESERVATION WHICH OFFENDS NATIONAL DIGNITY, WHICH DISTORTS OR CHANGES THE OBJECTIVES OF THE TREATY..." THESE WORDS, SAYS VELASQUEZ, "DEFINE THE NATIONAL STAND SHARED BY ALL CONSCIENTIOUS PANAMANIAN."

4-VELASQUEZ CONTINUE CITING THE TIME MAGAZINE REPORT OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN PRESIDENT CARTER AND SENATOR BROOKE AS PROOF THAT THE SENATE WAS SOLELY CONCERNED OVER "WHAT THEY CALL NATIONAL SECURITY" AND OTHER DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. WHEN THE PRESIDENT SPOKE TO BROOKE OF GIVING HIS WORD TO TORRIJOS, VELASQUEZ REPORTED THE SENATOR ANSWERED, "LOOK, THAT IS THE PANAMANIAN'S PROBLEM, NOT OURS."

5-CONTINUING HIS SERIES, VELASQUEZ TURNED MARCH 28 TO THE DECONCINI AMENDMENT ITSELF, TERMING IT "A WORRISOME RESERVATION" WHICH "CONSTITUTES THE REAL CRUX OF THE PROBLEM". IN CONCLUSION HE QUOTES FROM SENATOR DECONCINI'S MARCH 16 REMARKS INCLUDING: "THERE ARE NO CONDITIONS, NO EXCEPTIONS OR LIMITATIONS TO THIS RIGHT (TO INTERVENE TO OPEN THE CANAL). BY THE TERMS OF THIS AMENDMENT, THE U.S. WILL INTERPRET WHEN THAT NECESSITY EXISTS UNCLASSIFIED

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AND WILL EXERCISE ITS OWN JUDGMENT BY THE MEANS NECESSARY TO INSURE THAT THE CANAL WILL REMAIN OPEN AND ACCESSIBLE."
(FBIS-PA291420Y)

6-IN HIS MARCH 29 COMMENTARY VELASQUEZ STRESSES WHAT IN HIS OPINION PASSAGE OF THE TREATY MEANT TO PRESIDENT CARTER WHO TALKED TO EACH OF THE 100 SENATORS, MADE 87 PHONE CALLS IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS, ETC. "BUT, SAYS VELASQUEZ, "IN SPITE OF THE SPECTACULAR EMBELLISHMENTS OF THIS WHITE HOUSE PROMOTION CAMPAIGN, IT IS MY IMPRESSION THAT TO A CERTAIN DEGREE PRESIDENT CARTER AND HIS ADVISORS MISCALCULATED THE LEVEL OF INFLUENCE THEY COULD EXERCISE AND THE DEGREE OF RESISTANCE THEY WOULD ENCOUNTER AMONG THE SENATORS...CARTER ACCEPTED THIS DECONCINI AMENDMENT, BECAUSE IT WAS THE ONLY POSSIBILITY HE HAD OF ARRIVING AT THE 67 VOTES. IN SPITE OF WHAT HE ADMITS IN THE TIME MAGAZINE ARTICLE, THAT HE HAD GIVEN HIS WORD TO TORRIJOS, THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES COULD NOT LOSE THE VOTE--HE HAD TO WIN IT AT ANY PRICE."

7-THE TV-2 COMMENTATOR CONCLUDES: "AS FOR THE DESTINY OF THE PANAMA CANAL TREATY,...I'M INCLINED TO THINK THAT IT WILL ALSO BE APPROVED. MY FEAR IS THAT ONCE OPENED THE DOOR TO AMENDMENTS

AND ESTABLISHED THE PRECEDENT OF RESERVATIONS AND UNDERSTANDINGS
IN THE REOLUTION OF RATIFICATION, THIS TREATY WILL BE
APPROVED ALSO WITH A SERIES OF RESERVATIONS THAT COULD MATERIALLY
CHANGE THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER OF THE TREATY...TO THE
EXTEND THAT THIS DECISION (ACCEPTANCE OF THE SECOND TREATY)
RESTS ON GENERAL TORRIJOS, I THINK WE ARE IN THE PRESENCE OF ONE
OF THOSE CRUCIAL MOMENTS IN THE LIFE OF A NATIONA AND ITS
LEADER WHERE IN THIS CASE TORRIJOS WILL PROBABLY HAVE BEFORE HIM
THE MOST IMPORTANT AND FAR-REACHING DECISION THAT ANY
PANAMANIAN HAS HAD TO MAKE IN THE 75 YEARS OF THE HISTORY OF
THE REPUBLIC." ITEM
JORDEN

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